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Jean-Luc Godard's Breathless: The revelation of filmmaking as cinephilia

Alexandra Proud
Edith Cowan University

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Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*: The Revelation of Filmmaking as Cinephilia

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11th of June 2014

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Abstract

Auteur, Jean-Luc Godard directed his first feature film, *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*) in 1959 after a decade of working as a film critic for the contentious journal, *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Central to my thesis is the assertion that *Breathless* is continuous in critical dimension to Godard's literary criticism. It takes a certain breed of individual with a genuine passion for the state of the French film industry to sustain a politically charged critique of cinema from literary film criticism to filmmaking. The breed of individual is known as a cinéphile - an avid moviegoer who may also engage in critical activities in ciné-club cultures. A very early, influential example of this ciné-culture is *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, of which Godard was a member and critic of. The scholarship on cinephilia circumscribes literary film criticism as the central outlet of cinephilic expression. Godard's *Breathless* can also be categorised as film criticism and therefore, an example of cinephilia. I argue that *Breathless*, through its very deliberate intertextual construction, aims to interrogate and critique the classical Hollywood production, presenting a continuity of expression from literary criticism to filmmaking. By applying the framework of metatextual analysis to *Breathless*, I will contend that *Breathless* as an expression of film criticism, is therefore, an expression of cinephilia.

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“Were the cinema to disappear, I would simply accept the inevitable and turn to television: were television to disappear, I would revert to pen and paper. For there is a clear continuity between all forms of expression. It’s all one. The important thing is to approach it from the side which suits you best.” – Jean-Luc Godard

Introduction

Working as a film critic could potentially assist an aspiring filmmaker by informing the technical or theoretical aspects of their filmmaking practices. Or, alternatively, a degree of enthusiasm toward critiquing films could lead an individual to apply their critical knowledge to filmmaking. Indeed it makes sense that an accomplished filmmaker may have succeeded as a film critic or academic. From the 1950s to the early 1960s, accomplished French director, Jean-Luc Godard, was a successful film critic. Considering Godard's first feature film *Breathless* revolutionised modern cinema, it is with investigation into Godard's career as a film critic that I ask if his prior critical engagement be accountable for such 'cinematic revolution'.

In this thesis I argue that *Breathless* is more than just the by-product of film criticism or an exercise in 'putting to the test' theories considered by Godard in his prior critical engagement. I argue that *Breathless* is one and the same as film criticism. Godard's film criticism and *Breathless* share a corresponding function in critical expression, regardless of their belonging to two different mediums, literature and film. Godard's *Breathless* exhausts its relationship to other films and remains a sophisticated performance of intertextuality through the extensive use of references, quotations and influences. Further still, the references, quotations, and influences in *Breathless* are considered the climax of a decade's worth of involved critical activity concerning cinema.

One definition of intertextuality suggests that a text does not function as an independent unit, rather it establishes meaning throughout and beyond the text itself (Worten & Still, 1990, p. 2). Therefore, the availability of meaning within the text can shift depending on the viewer's cultural recognition of the intertextual texts, also determined through the circulation of signs and symbols within the language system. As Worten and Still point out "a delicate allusion to a work unknown to a reader, which therefore goes unnoticed, will have a dormant existence in that reading" (p. 2). That is, the limitations of the reader may inhibit a deeper, more conscious reading of the intertextual references within the text. Given the multiplicity of references in Godard's films, a reader may passively experience "works unknown" yet those works are nonetheless present in their reading. Although *Breathless* is influenced by

American film genres, and is intertextual in that regard, the film has a structured network of other textual references and exceeds simple commonalities between genre conventions or stylistic approaches. In fact, Godard's use of intertextuality can be more correctly described as "metatextuality" a form of intertextual discourse that makes critical commentary on other specific texts (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman Lewis, 1992, p. 208). To understand the metatextual references of other films cited in *Breathless*, an acquaintance with Godard's background as a film critic, including the cultural and historical circumstances of cinema, is required in determining the extent of the film's metatextuality. Understanding Godard's film criticism will effectively provide insight into Godard's theoretical perspective of cinema, mirrored in his film criticism and then in *Breathless*.

Breathless contributed to a new breed of film emerging within early 1960s France, a movement in cinema known as the *Nouvelle Vague*. The body of films emerging from this period were conceived by youth film enthusiasts, with a handful of directors (including Godard) recognised for their critique of cinema in the controversial journal, *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The *Cahiers* (critics at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*) critical engagement with cinema, including the rigorous critique of films and the polarising discussions of cinema's political landscape, makes *Breathless* Godard's extended pursuit for the reassessment and reinvention of cinema. With consideration of the evident metatextuality of *Breathless* and the meaning of cinephilia as "the speaking about films and then diffusing this discourse", I will form an argument for the making of *Breathless* as yet another means for Godard to critique cinema (Keathley, 2006, p. 6).

When conducting research into the scholarly literature surrounding Godard's criticism and the intertextual references in *Breathless*, it is evident that *Breathless* has not yet been referred to as an explicit example of cinephilia. I will herein argue that *Breathless* is an example of film criticism and is also, consequently, an example of cinephilia.

Literature Review: From Cinephilia to Academia

From the launch of Godard's filmmaking career there has been a sustained inquiry into his cinema that has developed alongside the evolution of film studies. Current studies into Godard's work draw on contemporary and historical film theory providing a fresh, dense perspective on the subject of his cinema. Theories on cinephilia, Godard's film criticism and the intertextuality of *Breathless* remain in contention as film theorists continue to seek new readings and gaps in knowledge. For example, a primary text of this thesis – *À bout de souffle: A French Film Guide* by Ramona Fotiade produced in 2013 – is an example of current academic discourse still invested in the scrutiny of the film. While there is also a strong historical body of literature on the *Cahiers du Cinéma* and the *Nouvelle Vague*, my study intends to progress that knowledge, with specific reference to filmmaking as cinephilia. Tracing Godard's film criticism to his filmmaking, particularly to his first feature length work *Breathless*, underlines the continuity and evolution of his cinephilic expressions. My thesis will be mapped out through current literature on cinephilia, Godard's film criticism and metatextuality in *Breathless*, thus revealing the interrelationship between the following practices – movie watching, criticism and filmmaking.

Considering cinephilia's peak during the 1950s, it is interesting to note that the body of academic knowledge on cinephilia is concentrated over the last two decades, with Paul Willemen and Susan Sontag first proclaiming its importance to film studies in the late 1990s. Christian Keathley's text, *Cinephilia and History or The Wind in the Trees* (2006) is the most progressive source on cinephilia relevant to my study that digests previous studies on cinephilia and presents a comprehensive and deserved treatment of the subject matter. Keathley introduces cinephilia by explaining the difficulty in applying the concept to methodologies of analysis within the film studies discipline (p. 2). Given its foundation in spectator experiences, cinephilia can only be determined through its secondary product, including film criticism and the ciné-club culture, which according to Keathley, can often be inadequate in uncovering what forces create cinephilic pleasure and screen attachments.

The definition provided by Keathley states that cinephilia is first and foremost “a way of watching films and only secondly a way of speaking about them and diffusing this discourse”, which refers directly to those who have a passionate interest for the movie going (2006, p. 6). Key scholars on Godard’s filmmaking, Andrew Dudley and Richard Roud, reinforce his passionate appetite for cinema, which in relation to the purpose of my study, makes Godard an appropriate candidate through which one can gain an understanding of cinephilia. Andrew distinguishes three key *Nouvelle Vague* players in the introduction of *Breathless: Jean-Luc Godard, director*, “today Truffaut stands for the sincerity of the Nouvelle Vague; Rohmer for its cool intelligence. Godard one might think, lit the fuse to set off this volatile concoction” (1987, p. 24). Keathley too measures Godard against his colleagues, explaining, “Godard was the critic most inclined to this practice of merely describing - but with great verve and excitement - a film’s “privileged moments”” (p. 83). These comparisons act as a reminder of Godard expressive practices concerning cinema criticism and imply Godard’s cinephilia as especially identifiable in relation to the other *Cahiers* turned filmmakers.

Keathley associates the concept of cinephilia with fetishism, and describes its blurred alignment to phenomenology and psychoanalytic theory, which initially arose from theories associated with Marxism, structuralism and existentialism (2006, p. 5). Thus, classical cinephilia marks a significant crossroads between modernism and post-modernism. Keathley explains that cinephilia is often dismissed for its theoretical ambiguity, yet it should be recognised for the debt owed to forming and manifesting film studies in the academic discipline. Keathley also emphasises the argument that cinephilia’s significance to the progression of the art form and academic film studies still sees its judgment as passé and pretentious (p. 3). A trend in academic discipline is the American institutionalisation of theories born from cinephilic discourse. The most observable example is the auteur theory, which was reshaped by American film theorist, Andrew Sarris, who redefined the theory by assigning it with evaluative criteria and authorising it into academic scholarship. Keathley’s response to film authorship opening ‘academic doors’, however, was that it left the cinephilic spirit behind and contributed to the rejection of cinephilia all together (p. 5). What is evident in Keathley’s introduction of cinephilia is its status within the film studies discipline and the implications in theorising viewing practices. As stated by the

definition, cinephilia involves a ‘diffusion of discourse’, which although is associated with film criticism, could also be proposed to extend to the inclusion of filmmaking as yet another form of cinephilic expression. My study will look precisely at filmmaking as cinephilia, an area only indirectly referred to in Keathley’s text or in other areas of literature on cinephilia.

Across the critical literature on *Breathless* there is apparent consensus that the film is postmodern, existential and metatextual, yet there has not been a text that has clearly articulated the film as an example of cinephilia (Fotiade, 2013, p. 94). Along with the progression of film theory, particularly with psychoanalytic film studies, a deeper understanding of screen attachments has evolved that is now reflected in studies of cinephilia. As proven by the landmark release of *Breathless*, it could be proposed that cinephilia has done more for modern cinema than the careful analysis and evaluative measures of its academic counterpart. Through the examination of the literature on Godard’s critical activity and the metatextuality in *Breathless*, evidence of a deep-seated involvement in 1940s and 1950s cinema can be drawn from both of Godard’s practices – film criticism and filmmaking. Keathley termed Godard’s film criticism as especially cinephilic; thus, it would be fair to also include the filmmaking in *Breathless* as a cinephilia expression.

Desiring Cinema: Cinephilia and *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*

According to Keathley, cinephilia primarily involves practices of spectatorship, which ritualises and fetishizes the experience of moviegoing and moviewatching. Consequently, the valued movie experience for cinéphiles can be translated through speech and the written word, resulting in a distinctive discourse of cinema in ciné-clubs and film criticism (2006, p. 6). Keathley discusses the history of cinephilia with emphasis on the influence Godard and his colleagues at *Cahiers du Cinéma* had to the production of a cinephilic discourse. Keathley asserts, “the two most famous and influential theoretical positions of post-war French cinephilia come from critics associated with the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*” (2006, p. 13). The first, André Bazin’s initial inquiry into the unique power of cinema, and the second, Bazin’s ‘rallied troops’ forming *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

André Bazin, chief editor of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, was considered responsible for establishing an intellectual inquiry into cinema not experienced before his time. His important essays “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” and “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema” written in the late 1940s, discuss the privileging of the photographic image to reality and argue against the popular notion of cinema’s pinnacle as an art form in the 1920s (Keathley, 2006, p. 13). Bazin explains, “the shot is evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it” (1967, p. 28), and validates his argument through the Italian Neo-Realism movement. He suggests the filmmakers of the Italian Neo-realist movements were “freed from the influence of Hollywood” and believed that these conditions of production allowed a more accurate representation of reality (Bazin, 1967, p. 12). Congruent with Bazin’s literary criticism was his active involvement in educating the public on the high art examples of cinema and popular genre films coming out of Hollywood (Keathley, 2006, p. 14). His public lectures, cinema clubs and critical writings endorsed cinema as a new cultural phenomenon, which sought to raise cinema’s novelty status to one equal to the higher arts. While critical writings and ciné-clubs of the time cite Bazin as the first model example of a cinéphile, his significance for my research lies in his influence on the younger generation of cinéphiles, Godard among them (p. 14).

The second significant theoretical position of post-war cinephilia, according to Keathley, explains the rising of Bazin's young film critics who would go on to form their own idiosyncrasies and critical positions in the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* (2006, pp. 5-7). Under Bazin's leadership, the young *Cahiers* including Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette would stray from Bazin's relatively calm and gauged considerations of cinema to form a particularly invasive and concentrated study on the works of respected directors. The critics marked their appreciation for certain Hollywood and European directors by gratifying them with exclusive 'auteur' status. For the *Cahiers*, 'auteur' status was measured by consistent quality and integrity within style, theme and worldview in a singular film or across a director's filmography. Derived from the French word for 'author' and conceived by Truffaut, the 'auteur' was an unusually talented filmmaker. Truffaut used the phrase "*La politique des auteurs*" (policy for authorship) placing emphasis on the singularity of a director, who through his or her repetition of techniques with camera placement, movement and lighting, opened opportunities for unique style and flare (p. 14). Much like Bazin's quest to elevate cinema's status, the auteur theory too defended cinema's artistry. Rejecting the perception of cinema as a borrowed art form (literature, photography, theatre and music) with its primary role to entertain masses, the auteur theory asserted cinema's unique essence by addressing, arguably its most important element, the director's creative vision.

The term 'auteur' was significant in Hollywood as it bestowed a distinction or higher recognition on a number of directors who worked with restrictions on their creative freedom. Hollywood perpetuated a cinema adept at exhausting successful formulas, stories and stars through their technological and economic resources of production. The concentration and monopolisation of the Hollywood system typically focused on the box office success of individual films. The *Cahiers* believed the system undignified a director's personal signature, which their auteur policy took responsibility for rectifying. American directors considered to be auteurs included Howard Hawks, Nicholas Ray, Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock. It was believed they deserved special credit for producing a distinct creative vision that went beyond their own lack of input in script and cast (Keathley, 2006, p. 14). The *Cahiers* considered the auteurs as forces within Hollywood's economic and technological paradigm who worked to neutralise the system's domination over creative autonomy.

The cinéphiles at the *Cahiers* were struck with an acquired form of “Americanitis”, which through the *politique des auteurs* presented an alternate form of receiving, digesting and theorising the imperialist cinema (Mulvey, 1996, p. 19).

Through a hierarchical high and low cultural divide between art forms, the perception that Hollywood as a system could exhibit a ‘higher’ artistic flare was considered a fairly outrageous provocation. Since its conception, Hollywood cinema has been extensively criticised for its shallow appeal and illusionist aesthetic, which generally capitalises on escapist mythology. The *Cahiers* more refined reception of Hollywood deciphers the American system as a product of the mechanical age and puts into perspective the levels in which Hollywood subverts directorial creativity. A new critical agenda emerged through these revelations, which, through a constant monitoring and negotiation of a director’s filmography, evaluated the level of directorial personality written within films (Buscombe, 1981, p. 23).

Cinéphiles believed that the cinema was “unlike any other: quintessentially modern; distinctively accessible; poetic and mysterious and erotic and moral - all at the same time” (Sontag, 1996, p. 1). Instead of regarding cinema as a copied art form (an imitation of theatre, literature, photography and music), early cinéphiles argued that it was the harmony of these borrowed forms that made cinema pure in its own right. The *Cahiers* believed the ‘moving image’ should be estranged from its precursors and recognised for its singularity and unique conditions of expression. Their arguments were supported by the meaning of cinema seen within certain films that utilized the unique features of the cinematic form. Noel Carroll argues that hybrid invented arts, like cinema, remove themselves from their relatives by isolating “the peculiar potentials or capacities of the medium” (1996, p. 5). It would be these capabilities within the medium that drive the artistic and creative forces achievable within that medium alone. In terms of uncovering these capabilities, cinephilia proved to be a disposition useful in establishing the locations of such ‘cinematic moments’. Cinephilia bred individuals that had a level of passion that allowed them to digest a large bank of films, sufficient to acquire an insight into the art form’s ‘spirit’ or ‘essence’ (Keathley, 2006, p. 18). Through their writing, the *Cahiers* concentrated their critical discourse upon those films that further legitimised the ontology of cinema and specifically, looked at the competency of the director who could make

that possible. It is, however, also recognised that the *Cahiers* were severely hindered by their submission to the cinema. The cinema for the *Cahiers* was like a religion and they were unavoidably implicated by their own version of a 'true' cinema, which demanded its own specific virtues and aesthetics.

There is no doubt that the concept of cinematic illusion faces a number of theoretical and psychological issues when attempting to define an 'essence'. As Roland Barthes famously argues in his 1967 essay "The Death of the Author", the meaning received from a text is largely created or born of the reader, the interpreter. Further still, it becomes increasingly more important to recognize a clear bias through the unorthodox critical writing practices of the cinéphiles at the *Cahiers*. In referring to the *Cahier* cinéphiles, Keathley quotes Dominique Paini, writing, "incontestably cinephilia was an original idea, one particularly innovative to the field of film criticism. It owed nothing to the Academy or art history" (Keathley, 2006, p. 15). Working independent of the institution of film theory meant that an emphasis on a careful and objective evaluation of a film did not take primary focus. A thorough consideration of genre, characters and themes, which a mainstream readership would expect, did not typically inhabit the *Cahiers* writing. Instead, the focus for the *Cahiers* was upon articulating the reoccurring themes in a director's style and recounting memorable moments within a film. These recounted moments are particularly alienating for a reader and hint at more specific cinephilic tendencies that rebel against conventional film criticism. Annette Michelson singles out Godard's review of Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956) due to its illustration of a singular moment in a film sequence;

The beauty of each of these close-ups, with their searching attention to the passage of time, comes from the sense that necessity is intruding on triviality, essence on existence. The beauty of Henry Fonda's face during this extraordinary second which becomes interminable is comparable to that of the young Alcibiades described by Plato in *The Banquet*. Its only criterion is the exact truth. We are watching the most fantastic of adventures because we are watching the most perfect, the most exemplary, of documentaries. (Godard, 1986, p. viii)

As evident in the extract of Godard's critical review, essence and truth is credited through a single shot in *The Wrong Man*, which he explains, transcends a kind of

reality that is equivalent to the documentary form. The equating of the moment to documentary, moves the moment away from the construction of narrative towards one that Godard relocates outside of the film. The moment for Godard seems to resonate with real life experiences and hence, expresses his preference towards a representation of reality. Keathley discusses this phenomenon with reference to all the *Cahiers* by explaining that “these scenes are recounted simply because they were particularly striking, and thus memorable, in their conception and execution... While simple pleasure alone may seem fair justification, one rarely finds such gratitude recounting scenes of contemporary film criticism” (2006, p. 83). Godard’s description of the ‘extraordinary second’ highlights the beauty, presence and perfection of such a moment, and fails to regard the moment in terms of its fiction. Through this example, it is apparent that Godard’s critical practice functioned through his own personal, fetishist experiences of ‘realisms’ within films.

The capturing of these striking and fleeting details is considered a classic indicator of the cinephilic condition, and important in understanding cinephilic pleasure. The ‘cinephiliac moment,’ a phrase first coined by Willemen, is defined as “the fetishizing of a film, either individual shots or marginal (often unintentional detail)” (Keathley, 2006, p. 7) and was developed in response to the critical discourse of the *Cahiers*. The cinephiliac moment conceptualises the deeper degree of meaning given to a filmic moment and illustrates the level of absorption and euphoria achievable through the screen’s images. Demonstrating the level of absorption in particular is Willemen’s insistence on a preference for cinephiliac over cinephilic, explaining how the experience “relates to something that is dead, past, but alive in memory” (1994, p. 227). The grievance for images would also be preserved through criticism as a cataloguing device, transporting the individual to the pleasure of the moment. Another crucial point highlighted throughout the literature is that recounted moments are neither pivotal in the film’s construction of dramatic effect nor necessarily add to the film’s intended meaning (Keathley, 2006, pp. 30-33). The isolation of images favours a critical focus on imagery aesthetics, where impressions are left through the poetics of the image, rather than the film’s entire meaning (p. 35). The relishing of colours, expressions, gestures, and textures give value to partial detail, rather than the intentional construct. These details, found especially poignant, escape the systematicity and predictability of a constructed cinema, and emphasise the art of the

accidental or unintentional. A reading of cinema that ignores the construction of the narrative and is especially sensitive to realistic or figurative sequences, advances the critique of Hollywood by subverting the dominant reading relative to the construction of the narrative.

In *Camera Lucida*, semiotician and photography theorist, Roland Barthes, defines the duality between presence and absence of photographic representations. Similar to the *Cahiers* critical writings, Barthes brings his own subjectivity to his photographic examinations and presents the virtues he believes define the photographic art form. Barthes' defines a photographic essence through images that, for him, inspire a private meaning and exceed the realm of semiotic analysis. Barthes deciphers two 'discontinuous elements' that separate the images that 'politely exist' for him and those that are marked with details of attraction; the former he terms the 'studium' and the latter, the 'punctum' (Barthes, 2000, p. 27). The studium refers to the meaning encoded within the image and the meaning arrived at through an instinctive effort to understand the image. The 'punctum', however, is the meaning that reaches out beyond the 'studium', existing within the partial details captured in a small handful of photographs that Barthes examines in his book. The 'punctum' is explained by Barthes as that which interrupts the banality of images and pierces the viewer with poignant and figurative detail (pp. 23-43). Barthes' 'punctum' aligns with the aesthetical observations developed within the *Cahiers* criticism and acts as a framework to further comprehend the critical discourse of the *Cahiers*. Once again, Barthes' theories subvert the process that enslaves the viewer to a dominant reading of the image. Similar to the *Cahiers*, the image reveals its value for the viewer and not just its identity, which in effect, presents art's responsibility and the extent of involvement to which it can offer an individual. Barthes does to photography what the *Cahiers* did to cinema and both invest in the pursuit of truth within subjectivity.

The general disobedience that distinguishes the way the *Cahiers* viewed cinema did not specifically belong to the *Cahiers*, per se. In 1950s Paris there existed a network of intelligentsia that believed the compliance with social systems that once held society together, was no longer required. The *Cahiers* cinephilia is largely determined through its cultural conditions, contextualised by the trend for social progress within a French society in crisis (Forbes & Kelly, 1995, pp. 140-149). The depression and

trauma experienced in the aftermath of World War II, it could be argued, imposed a general sense of reminiscence for the past, which, for the *Cahiers*, could be reflected through the cinephilic dependency on the screen and the experience of cinephiliac moments (Ng, 2010). The cinephiliac moment could be proposed as a way to escape the tension between a dishevelled society and the individual's social responsibility for its solution. The time also provided an opportunity for the youth to revive a fallen culture and reshape the aspects they believed needed attention. The *Cahiers*, as part of the youth enthusiasts and French intellectual movement, looked to cinema as a competent art form that could speak to the masses and contribute to the reclaiming of the French identity.

The impact of World War II on France and the Nazi military governance until 1944, left the country in urgent need of political and economic reconstruction by Allied forces. France experienced a slow recovery and it was essential to the rebuilding of society that they acquire assistance from powerful economic forces, such as America. After the German occupation of France, Hollywood films dominated French theatres, becoming more noticeable, more culturally present than before the war (Forbes & Kelly, 1995, p. 173). American films filled a void, highlighting the lack of films available to French audiences of their national cinema. Jim Hillier argues that it was the strength of the American cinema and its ability to reflect its own culture that the *Cahiers* believed lacked in their own cinema (1985, p. 24). However dissimilar the American culture would be to the *Cahiers* standard for cinema, Hollywood's intervention on a French national cinema was necessary, providing a referent against which the *Cahiers* would measure French cinema. Hillier writes "although American and Italian cinema often seemed to be the main interest of the *Cahier* critics, more often than not in their writings on those cinemas what was fundamentally at stake was French cinema" (1985, p. 21). The *Cahiers* established binaries between the France vs. American ideologies, and homogeny vs. existentialism, which was to lie at the centre of their conflict for a (French) cinema that was engaged and artistic.

The *Cahiers* followed the intelligentsia present in Paris in the 1950s and contributed to the production of ideas that saw France's intellectual communities having something new to say about art, literature and politics. Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism heavily influenced the *Cahiers* and therefore cannot go unstated in

the discussion of cinephilia. During the 1950s, Sartre was considered a public intellectual who fought against bourgeois ideology in the same way the *Cahiers* fought against bourgeois film criticism. Sartre believed in challenging the assumptions by which modern French society lived and lead a perceptual revolt against the systems that constituted modern life. These systems included morality, Christianity, the family structure and economic responsibility. Sartre's philosophy was an uncompromising argument for personal freedom and posited a powerful attitude for a generation struggling to restore confidence and national identity in devastated France. András Bálint Kovács states that Sartre "formulated existential philosophy on the level of the everyday personal philosophy", which in its context, provided opportunity for the ordinary individual to leave behind the trauma and depression of World War Two (2006, p. 137). Although the context of Sartre's philosophy was significant, what is most important about Sartre's philosophy was its power to change a generation and inspire a way of looking that was free from the confinements of institutions. The *Cahiers* critical discourse would be a prime example of the freedom they demanded for their version of cinema. The development of a discourse that exceeds evaluative criteria and practices the detailing of subjective experiences, diametrically opposes the regulations of the established institution of film criticism. Godard specifically describes the impact of Sartre on his own pursuit of knowledge, which would eventually lead to his passion for cinema theory; "I had encyclopaedic tendencies. I wanted to read everything. I wanted to know everything. Existentialism was at its peak at the time. Through Sartre I discovered literature, and he led me to everything else" (Godard, 2008, p. 18).

The *Cahiers* shared vision for an engaged cinema served as the basis for a voice, which would later be mirrored in Godard's first feature length film, *Breathless*. The *Cahiers* stood united in a collective force against conventional film criticism and used the auteur theory to establish a system that permitted the appraisal of respected directors. The Hollywood film industry would function as the *Cahiers* main target, and the films appraised by the *Cahiers* were done so through the lens of their value to the cinematic form. Cinephilia would be the undisputed disposition that would determine the rigorousness and enthusiasm the *Cahiers* had towards the progress of cinema. The value favoured directors added to the prosperity of the cinematic art form, was determined through a unique aesthetical outlook which fetishized marginal

details at the expense of critical evaluations of themes, characters and narrative. Conceptualised as the cinephiliac moment, the *Cahiers* would use such moments of marginal film to confirm a subjective and aesthetical preference, and address the problematic question of cinematic essence. In 1950s France, the growth of existentialism influenced the sense of freedom that allowed the *Cahiers* to form their own critical nuances and relate the question of cinematic essence to their individual experiences of cinema. As such, an investigation of Godard's critique of cinema is necessary to the study of *Breathless* and will establish Godard's idiosyncrasies and preference for certain directors. The directors and moments appraised by Godard will be investigated in the following chapters, establishing an alignment of intertextual references to the films Godard critiques.

Godard's Criticism

The primary text used to examine Godard's criticism is *Godard on Godard* (1986), a text containing the entire collection of Godard's critical writing from 1950 to 1967. The text also features a forward by Annette Michelson and an introduction by Richard Roud that guides the reader to a small handful of reviews that best exemplify Godard's critical idiosyncrasies and point of view. Godard's criticism paints a portrait of cinema's historiography and, through this painting, a vision for a cinema as a viable art form. The cross-section of celebrated directors, many of whom were either openly praised, closely assessed or even ridiculed, provided a platform for Godard's engagement with the technicalities, standards and directorial approaches of the cinematic landscape of the 1950s. As discussed by Andrew, Godard's love affair with cinema is perhaps most poignant compared to the other *Cahiers*, and is noted through his volatile judgements and instigations for conflict (1987, p. 4). Godard is distinguished from his colleagues by his critical characteristics which are observed as being more cathartic and diary-like in approach (Roud, 1986, p. 10). Godard's unpredictability and hedonism saw him regarded as the critic truest to existentialism and truest to cinephilia, due to his passionate appetite for cinema, conveyed so openly and daringly throughout his essays. Richard Roud's introduction in *Godard on Godard* also describes Godard's reactionary criticism. He explains that according to his critical unrest it could not have been predicted that he would go on to become one of the most important directors of his generation;

It would be nice to be able to say that one had instantly recognised that Godard was the most significant critic of his generation, and that he was bound to go on to become the most important director. Alas, no: one couldn't see then where his theorizing was leading or even, in fact, if it was leading anywhere at all... Furthermore, Godard was above all a polemical critic. He was unkind, unfair and unreasonable. (Godard, 1986, p. 7)

It remains no accident that Godard came to filmmaking through criticism, and from a supportive sub-culture of cinéphiles. For Godard, filmmaking and film criticism was more than just a conflict of interests, instead, it was a groundbreaking combination executed as one and the same thing.

Defence and Illustration of Classical Construction

Godard's practice of argumentation is most evident in his theoretical writing and critical essays. These essays reinforce his stylistic preferences and further advocate for the director's who produce films under the 'classical' model – namely Otto Preminger, Joseph Mankiewicz, Mark Robson and Alfred Hitchcock. In his second critical piece *Defence and Illustration of Classical Construction*, Godard's "opting for morality and perspective as the proper concerns of film" (Henderson, 1974, p. 35) prompts an attack on André Bazin, whose established theories in cinema became extremely fertile after the Italian neo-realism movement in the 1940s. Bazin proposed there exists a mode of cinema that provides historical, aesthetical and theoretical evidence for cinema's link to reality and can be systematically determined through 'neutral' techniques in filmmaking. The camera setup he advises includes the deep focus and long take; a cinematic technique featured throughout the Italian Neo-Realism movement used to present the conditions of working class Italians in a difficult economic period (Andrew, 1973, p. 64). Bazin's logic of effectively representing reality is refuted on many fronts and is particularly challenging to justify, as it denies the differing styles and forms of cinema that define the medium as an expressive device. Godard's piece is a particularly blatant disagreement with the Bazinian position, arguing that the technique of the close up reveals its significance through a psychological reality, rather than its cause for a contextual/political reality;

Consider the method of Otto Preminger. The cunning and precise paraphrase this Viennese makes of reality, and you will soon notice that the use of shot and reaction shot, the preference for medium rather than long shot, reveals a desire to reduce the drama to the immobility of the face, for the face is not only part of the body, it is prolongation of an idea which one can capture and reveal. A beautiful face, as La Buyère wrote, is the most beautiful of sights... Paradoxically, therefore, the simplest close-up is also the most moving. Here our art reveals its transcendence most strongly, making the beauty of the object signified burst through the sign. (Godard, 1986, p. 28)

Godard's opposing aesthetic preferences highlights his independent views, his rejection of established critical formats and his endorsement of particular American directors as artists. Godard counters Bazin's argument for the long shot, and in so doing, he effectively privileges his own experience of cinema through Otto Preminger's sequence, and his own preference for montage. Godard uses Preminger

in his example of the close-up, explaining how the specific montage sequence reaches a climax in a single reaction shot. Godard argues how the reaction shot exemplifies the beauty of the object represented (the face), concluding with his point on the representative power of a simple close up and its wider artistic and expressive value. Godard regards the technique in terms of its heightened emotional affect, suggesting that Preminger's close up transcends its semiological significance – this claim, particularly forceful in illustrating a point directly against the long take.

Unlike Bazin's belief that cinema should be politically aware and survey the political landscapes of a time and place, Godard prefers the immediacy of character based narratives with representations of their inner life. Godard describes the illusion of proximity in the close up, which the shot-reverse-shot is then used to juxtapose the close-up and execute dramatic effect. Godard writes "language is only the reflection of passions...beauty is merely avowal of personality" (1986, p. 29), suggesting that the cinematic language itself can represent passion and beauty through editing devices (montage), and not necessarily through an actor's emotional conveyance on screen. Godard's critical insight presents cinema's unique conditions of expression, which unlike theatre, do not rely on the performance of actors to command emotional effect. The long take which attempts to reproduce an event, gives little to no room for the director to construct his film and to reflect his individual style through his/her own treatment and arrangement of shots. Godard's attachment to montage early on in his critical career would play a central role throughout his criticism and subsequently, through the unprecedented use of the jump cut in *Breathless*.

Montage My Fine Care

Montage My Fine Care as the name suggests, is Godard's successive theoretical piece on montage, similar to *Defence and Illustration of the Classical Construction*. In *Montage My Fine Care* there is a clearer development of the discussion of the integral processes of filmmaking, including the practices of the film shoot itself and, in particular, emphasis on the post-production stages of filmmaking. Godard argues in opposition to the popular myth that the editing stage (the notion that the editing is left entirely to the editor who pieces together an already advised sequence of film) is not as director-focused as the former shooting stage. Godard argues that the precision

required in cutting and assembling film not only determines the rhythm and emotional impact of the film, but also its brilliance;

Knowing just how long one can make a scene last is already montage. Certainly a brilliantly directed film gives the impression of having been placed end to end, but a film brilliantly edited gives the impression of having suppressed all direction.... Invention and improvisation takes place in front of the movieola just as much as it does on the set. Cutting a camera movement in four may prove more effective than keeping it as one shot. (Godard, 1986, p. 40)

When Godard explains that “a film brilliantly edited gives the impression of having passed all direction”, he alludes to the editing and the assembly of montage as superior to direction in the shooting stages. Furthering this point in particular is Godard’s emphasis on the interrelationship between the *mise-en-scène* and montage, and the necessary extension of directorial control in the editing suite (Henderson, 1974, p. 30). Godard states “montage is an integral part of the *mise-en-scène*” (1986, p. 39) and recognises the division of labour as detriment to the construction of montage. It should be pointed out that *mise-en-scène* for the *Cahiers* critics did not refer to the English translation of *mise-en-scène*, meaning continuity within a frame. It more simply referred to directing (Fotiade, 2013, p. 19). Again, the notion of sole directorial control and auteur ‘writing’ his own film prevails throughout all production stages, and is most strongly conveyed when Godard states;

This is why saying that a director should closely supervise the editing of his film comes to the same thing as saying that the editor should also forsake the smell of glue and celluloid for the heat of the arc-lamps. Wandering on the set will discover exactly where the interests of the scene lies, which are its strong and weak moments, what demands a change of shot, and will therefore not yield the temptation of cutting simply on movement. (Godard, 1986, pp. 40-41)

Godard points out that adhering to the emotional subtext of the scene is achieved through the collaboration and awareness between the directing and editing operations. The indication Godard makes to “the right to final cut” is an issue that directly coincides with the auteur theory and its defence of the industrial system obscuring directorial personality (Michelson, 1986, p. viii). For Godard, the art of filmmaking is his primary. As Fotiade describes “one can say that his break-away from conventional

editing did not result from a dilettante's lack of experience, but rather from the critic's in depth knowledge of the principles and evolution of continuity editing" (2013, p. 21). It is here that we measure Godard's defence for the right to final cut to the editing in *Breathless*. A setting up of counter cinema would form through Godard exercising the right to final cut, which would see his breaking of traditional continuity editing.

Joseph Mankiewicz

Godard's first essay in the second issue of *La Gazette du Cinema* (1950) titled *Joseph Mankiewicz*, is an appreciative review of director Joseph Mankiewicz. Godard introduces the director "as one of the most brilliant American directors" (p. 13) and continues, making brief mention of Mankiewicz's films and drawing attention to Mankiewicz's frequent and respected installations for cinema. A habit that Godard formed in his first published film review was to create a comparative hierarchy among directors, writers and artists. Fotiade states, "such references, and the occasional mention of the missed or successful *rendez-vous* between authors, are scattered throughout Godard's film criticism of the period" (2013, p. 18). In this review, Mankiewicz is placed on the same level of importance as Italian novelist, Alberto Moravia. The reasons behind Moravia's inclusion are not made explicit within the review, but allude to the cinephilic tendency of comparing and contrasting material through a wider social and cultural lens. Godard's review of Mankiewicz's *House of Strangers* (1949) is a character-focused review that offers insight into Mankiewicz's treatment of marriage and family affairs, where the internal struggle of characters becomes the arc of the story;

Mankiewicz's garden fills with brutal strangers who force him to a strict narrative objectivity... Mankiewicz's characters are ambitious people, who through deception, end up by succeeding, and lovers who through divorce end up marrying... Mankiewicz's marital chronicles offer romantic perspectives... characters reveal the same lack of grip on life. (Godard, 1986, pp. 14-15)

What is evident is Godard's appreciation of films and literature concerning personal or emotional struggle and his attempt to gain an anthropological or theoretical understanding of human relationships through moviewatching. The themes of *House of Strangers* evident through the review, including romance, ambition and deception,

can also be attributed to themes exhibited in *Breathless* and the romance between the main characters, Patricia and Michel.

In 1958 Godard declares Joseph Mankiewicz's *The Quiet American* (1958), the best film of the year. In his written critique of the film, titled *The Quiet American* Godard pays critical attention to Mankiewicz as a scriptwriter, making note of the eloquent dialogue in *The Quiet American* that, in his opinion, does not necessarily translate effectively through the cinematic medium. Godard states "each character, each line of dialogue is of poetic subtlety rare on the screen" (1986, p. 84), thereby arguing that the dialogue is the strongest feature of *The Quiet American*. However, this is also Godard's complaint of the film as he later argues that Mankiewicz's script is "too perfect" suggesting that the film lacks 'cinema'. Godard makes it clear that direction is cinema's unique expressive device, rather than its script;

Gene Kelly declared bitterly "the cinema is becoming a means of expression for the writer instead of the director". This is a complaint one might make about Mankiewicz: that he is too perfect a writer to be a perfect director as well. Basically, what is missing from *The Quiet American* is cinema... Though from a matter of regret, *The Quiet American* is still the most interesting film about at the moment. (Godard, 1986, p. 84)

Godard argues that an investment or attachment to the poetry of the script can lead to a performance of the script, instead of the performance of cinematic devices. An over-developed script, for example, could potentially undermine the flow and agility required for the shifting production conditions. Godard refers to *The Quiet American* stating "it all looks, in fact, as though everything had been planned on paper" (1986, p. 83) suggesting its literary form did not have its application to montage. When Godard states "what is missing from *The Quiet American* is cinema", he refers to the literary component in *The Quiet American* 'telling' the film instead of the medium-specific features 'showing' the film. What is significant about this review, as identified by Henderson, is the rejection of complete control over script - a move away from the position taken in *Defence and Illustration of the Classical Construction*. The former position taken by Godard in 'Defence' is that the director constructs his film at every turn. Henderson explains this as an evolution from rigor and precision, to chance and spontaneity (1974, p. 41).

Alfred Hitchcock

Rosenbaum describes Godard's review of Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956), as his best, single review for its "rigor, imagination and feeling for nuance that few other critics of the period have equalled" (1972, p. 124). In Rosenbaum's corresponding piece on Godard's criticism, titled *Le Vrai Coupable: Two Kinds of Criticism in Godard's Work*, he states, "Godard's analysis of Hitchcock is concerned mainly with stylistic articulations of states and consciousness, metaphysical states of being, and thematic and dramatic significations" (1999, p. 317). Godard places particular emphasis on Hitchcock's adaptations of style to "dramatic significations", acknowledging Hitchcock's intuition for treating the subject matter with appropriate cinematic techniques. In *The Wrong Man*, Godard commends Hitchcock's continued service to the emotional subtext of the film throughout his filmography;

Throughout his entire career, Hitchcock has never used an unnecessary shot. Even the most anodyne of them invariably serve the plot, which they enrich rather than as the 'touch' beloved of the impressionists enriched their paintings. They acquire their particular meaning only in the context of the whole. (Godard, 1986, p. 49)

This review makes evident Godard and Hitchcock's shared vision of a cinema that is 'truly' cinematic. The lean to a thorough evaluation of Hitchcock's service to the emotional subtext of the film stands in juxtaposition to many of Godard's less articulate essays that centre on his enthusiasm rather than critical assessment (Michelson, 1986, p. ix).

Nicholas Ray

Henderson writes "in the year that follows, July 1957 to June 1958, Godard's critical work does not reveal a central theme or focus" (1974, p. 40). Rosenbaum too explains how Godard's criticism of the period tends to "forsake critical decorum altogether, take off into the clouds and deliver impassioned dithyrambs" (1972, p. 124). Evidently, the critical evaluations apparent in Godard's critique of Hitchcock's film *The Wrong Man*, are completely absent in his essay of Nicholas Ray's *Bitter Victory* (1957), as he reverts back to passion rather than evaluation. In the critique of Nicholas

Ray's work, Godard makes a radical declaration for medium-specificity. In the opening paragraph Godard makes a series of grand claims for Ray's cinema;

There was theatre (Griffiths), poetry (Murnau), painting (Rossellini), dance (Eisenstein), music (Renoir). Hence there is cinema. And the cinema is Nicholas Ray... *Bitter Victory* is not a reflection of life, it is life itself turned into film, seen from behind the mirror where the cinema intercepts it. It is at once the most direct and the most secret of films, the most subtle and the crudest. It is not cinema, it is more than cinema. (Godard, 1986, p. 64)

The review is, above all, a personal exercise of indexicality, which ranks and orders a historiography of modern cinema, and through the ranking device, acknowledges Ray's cinema in relation to other expressive art forms including poetry, painting, dance and music. This review, claiming Ray as the epitome of cinema, sheds light on Godard's cinephilia. It acts as a memoir of Godard's cinema experiences, which as he so passionately praises Ray's film, is unable to owe the reader an explanation to such radical claims. Apart from being overcome with appreciation, the review is an expression of Godard's passion, discovery and courage.

The French Cinema

Godard's review of *Montparnasse 19* (1958) is not unlike his review of *Bitter Victory* in that they both present criticism in a void; that is, without substantiation. Godard writes;

The fact remains. Montparnasse 19 will not prove to you that Modi loved Jeanne or that Jeanne loved Modi; nor that Paris is a wonderful city, that women are beautiful and men are weak; nor that love is pleasant, or that painting is tedious; nor that an art is more important than anything else or anything else more important than art. No. Its purpose lies elsewhere. Its purpose is the absence of purpose. Its truth, the absence of truth. (Godard, 1986, p. 74)

Similar to *Bitter Victory*, *Montparnasse 19* forsakes its critical dimension and makes a claim for an element of 'truth' in representation, an element Godard aspires to in his cinema-going experience. Godard's review of *Montparnasse 19* stands out as a continuation of an anxiety that led to the rehabilitation of France's national cinema through their own filmmaking in the *Cahiers* circle.

Truffaut's release of *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups*) (1959) sparked a movement in French Cinema that paved the way for cinema's most influential and most important directors. Along with other respected French directors including Jean Renoir, Robert Bresson, Alexandre Astruc, Alain Renais, Jean Pierre Melville, Jacques Rivette, Agnes Varda and Luis Buñuel, Truffaut would contribute to the future of the French cinema, along with its international recognition. At the time of *The 400 Blows*' release, Godard was writing for *Arts*, a newspaper of national circulation. Godard's contribution to *Arts* marked his most busy, most critical period, which would build a critical momentum that was to peak in *Breathless*. In *Arts* Godard praises Truffaut's film for its freedom, morally and aesthetic;

With *Les Quatre cents coups*, Francois Truffaut enters both modern cinema and the classroom of our childhood...*Les Quatre cents coups* will be the proudest, stubbornest, most obstinate, in other words most free film in the world. Morally speaking. Aesthetically, too. (Godard, 1986, p. 120)

Like Godard, Truffaut came to filmmaking via criticism at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Godard admired the success of his friend from the sidelines and began preparation for an equally important instalment for the French national cinema (Andrew, 1998, p. 4). It would be the mix of Truffaut's *400 Blows* and the rough storyline for *Breathless* (a 'fraternal' gift by Truffaut for his eager colleague) that would contribute to the formation of a visual style and the narrative that was to follow in *Breathless*. It is perhaps Truffaut's commissioning of *Breathless* through *400 Blows* that makes Truffaut's film the most intertextual because if it was not for Truffaut's success, Godard may not have had the assurance in his own filmmaking.

An overview of Godard's body of criticism presents a mixture of critical and stylistic approaches to cinema's theories and filmmaking that make for an insight an affliction for cinema. It is through Godard's changeable temperament that one thing is clear; there remains no inconsistency in Godard's full attention to the welfare of the cinema. Godard's direct refutation of Bazin's established theories, his plea for montage and his advocating the right to final cut all establish the theoretical grounds through which Godard would view and critique cinema. Reviews on Mankiewicz, Hitchcock Ray and Truffaut, show a brief interpretation of filmmakers and the level of admiration

attributed to each. Through Godard's genuine vigour and conviction, what is presented in his critical essays is Godard himself. Whilst establishing his voice through criticism, Godard provides himself with a thorough education on cinema and pre-production for his cinematic debut. Although brief mention has been given to *Breathless* throughout the conclusions drawn by Godard's criticism, direct examples of intertextuality in *Breathless* will serve to form a better understanding of the translation between criticism and filmmaking.

Metatextuality in *Breathless*

As suggested by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Godard did not script the exposé of the Hollywood illusion in *Breathless*, but rather through impulse, revealed the underlying processes of production that would typically set up a passive reading (2008, p. 433). Godard himself confesses, “I thought I had made a realistic film like Richard Quine’s *Pushover* (1954), but it wasn’t that at all” (1986, p. 175); Godard admitting the final text, and the reading of the text, is beyond his authorship. The result of Godard’s seemingly spontaneous production style, is a premeditated reflection on his extensive film knowledge and a decade of film criticism. Godard’s metatextual film reflects his own cinephilia and completes the full circle of theory to practice. In fact, *Breathless* peaks in terms of Godard’s panoptic study of cinema. His aesthetic/stylistic preferences and the directors favoured in his criticism are cited throughout the film. Simultaneously, he embeds American cinematic trends of the 1940s and 1950s. In the absence of production constraints, Godard constructs two competing “paranarratives”, one mythic and the other that interrogates these myths, working together to expose and subvert the limitations of the Hollywood construction. As the title of the film suggests, *Breathless* breathes life back into a cinema out of breath, and does so by using plagiarism as invention (Andrew, 1987, p. 20). *Breathless* is a revolt in style and, through its complicated perspective, pays homage to a cinematic history, courageously calling for the reformation of the modern cinema.

The story of *Breathless* depicts the demise of Frenchman, Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo), a penniless criminal. In his plan to meet up with the woman of his desires, American student Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg), he shoots and kills a policeman, finding himself a wanted man. Michel’s dreams of escaping the French border and finding refuge in Rome seem dim when Patricia refuses Michel’s offer to come to Rome with him. In closing, Patricia’s doubts regarding their romantic relationship force her to report Michel to the police, who after many successful attempts of avoiding capture, is shot in the back, dramatically falling to his death. As suggested by Richard Brody, the story resembles a classic American film noir with similar themes to Joseph H. Lewis’ *Gun Crazy* (1949). Andrew also notes the noir dramatic flow from *Gun Crazy* as second-order takings from Fritz Lang’s *You Only Live Once* (1936), of which *Gun Crazy* remains a B-grade variation (1987, p. 14). In

a scene where Michel hides in a movie theatre, the soundtrack to Lewis' *Gun Crazy* is heard as Michel makes his escape. As described by Andrew, Michel's dream of escaping his misfortune is typical of many 1940s antiheroes (1987, p. 14). Bordwell and Thompson propose *Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Double Indemnity* (1944) as sharing common film noir narrative vehicles "involving young criminals on the run" (2008, p. 428). Godard too explains how he believed he was making *Scarface* (1932), but instead acknowledges the film's comparability to the children's fantasy novel, *Alice in Wonderland* (1986, p. 175).

In *Breathless*, Godard opts for a simple copycat version of the classic noir while seemingly remaining aware of the style's incompatibility with an American heritage. The 'double reading', which is the French production against its conventional origins, set up two opposing dialogues that critique cinema. The main characters Michel and Patricia play dual roles; that is, the conventional role in accordance with their noir characters, and the other, false identities that lie beyond the fictional parameters of the film. Michel is impersonating the typified film noir actor, Humphrey Bogart, wiping his thumb across his top lip "mimicking one of the authentic (unstaged) tics of 'Bogey'" (Andrew, 1987, p.13). And underneath Patricia is an American runaway, echoing the life of actor Jean Seberg who travels to Europe in hope of reviving her acting career after starring in two poorly regarded Hollywood films. As both characters establish their Hollywood referent outside the film's fiction, they too enact their portrayed American stereotype inside the film's fiction. Michel's lack of redeeming qualities and existentialism removes him from the depressed, conflicted American noir prototype who portray entrapment rather than freedom. Patricia is also removed from the noir femme fatale, the object of desire and temptress, and conflicting portrayals of feminine stereotypes (Fotiade, 2013, p. 80). Outside of the characters, contradictions lie in the American film noir as a formal visualisation, whilst the narrative intransitivity, (the use of the jump cuts, breaking the fourth wall) create a fragmented and interrupted narrative. Considering the film's irony and discontinuity, *Breathless* does not convey the same seriousness as a film noir or Hollywood melodrama. The focus shifts to the documentation of 1950s French culture, the conflict of politics between the American and French ideologies and the use of Hollywood conventions as templates for redefining narrative and character codes (Fotiade, 2013, p. 95).

In an act of generosity, Francois Truffaut passed on to Godard (his colleague and then, aspiring filmmaker) his rough outline for a script that would become *Breathless*. Godard took full custody of the project, proceeding with ‘auteurial’ control over dialogues. It would be the attachment of Truffaut’s success to Godard’s credentials that would contribute to *Breathless* as another trademark of the *Nouvelle Vague*. *Breathless* would also be the only film of the *Nouvelle Vague* that presented a profile of the *Cahiers* ideology. A direct reference to the magazine, *Cahiers du Cinéma* is made within the narrative of the film and is yet another signal to the breeding ground and intellectual heritage of *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers. Early in the film Michel, wondering the streets of Paris, is offered a copy of the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* to purchase. The young seller asks “You haven’t anything against youth?” Michel responds, “Sure, I prefer old people,” declining the sale (Godard, 1987, p. 50). The product placement of the magazine creates an association with Parisian youth culture that asserts the significance of a generation of youth critics but also, becomes a selling point for a generation of youth critics turned filmmakers. The reference to Godard’s critical history in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* is self-referential and a fairly forward act in self-advertising, announcing his presence on the scene and attempt at delivering his promise of auteurship. Godard would also include influential filmmaker, Jean-Pierre Melville who was a major influence on the *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers, in a cameo appearance playing Parvulesco, the French novelist.

Breathless translates “Hollywood codes into New Wave jargon” (Fotiade, 2013, p. 69), showing off its Parisian iconography in a particularly superficial and conspicuous manner. In constructing the French backdrop, Godard has littered a series of explicit references to American culture. For example, in one scene Patricia sells the *New York Herald Tribune* on the monumental Champs-Elysees. Michel on the other hand dissolves into the Parisian backdrop and is often used as an instrument in constructing the viewer’s idea of a particular place. Unlike Patricia’s selling of newspapers, her journalist assignments, scheduled meetings at café’s with her work associate, and hotel room, Michel, lacks any sense of attachment to an environment and is often seen pointlessly ‘hanging out’ by himself on the streets of Paris. A chain of references to several films including the works of filmmakers, Mark Robson, Budd Boetticher, Bretaigre Windust, Otto Preminger and Robert Aldrich, is included between Godard’s

use of the ‘outdoor/public studio’, often using Michel’s aimless wondering as the vehicle for a series of citations. Michel walks past the Aldrich film poster on a Parisian street of *10 Seconds to Hell* (1959) with the slogan “*Vivre dangereusement jusqu’au bout*” (to live dangerously till the end) cited specifically because “at that time Aldrich was part of our cinéphile references” (Andrew, 1987, p. 13). The action in *The Enforcer* (1951) (starring Bogart) is cited when Michel attacks a man washing his hands in a public toilet and robs him of his money. The film posters of Budd Boetticher’s *Westbound* (1959) and the film itself are referenced as Michel and Patricia see the film at the theatre and kiss longingly throughout. Another separate reference made in the movie theatre is the sound track of Otto Preminger’s *Whirlpool* (1949). And lastly, a direct reference to Robson’s *The Harder They Fall* (1956) when Michel encounters an actor’s profile of Humphrey Bogart advertising his last film.

The direct reference to *The Harder They Fall* is the exemplification of Godard’s “through the looking glass” approach to filmmaking. Michel - in his gangster outfit complete with his suit, hat, sunglasses and cigarette - stumbles across an actor profile picture of Humphrey Bogart in a Parisian cinema. Michel has an extended moment admiring the advertisement of Bogart’s last film, which in its construction signifies the Bogart legacy. Michel’s pausing over the actor profile reminds the viewer of Bogart as the star body and site for spectatorial fetish. Bogart’s character nuances re-enacted by Michel (his authentic ties including the thumb across lip) suggest sites of figuration associated with the character that extend across Bogart’s filmography (Keathley, 2006 p. 49). Considering his star status in the 1940s and 1950s, Humphrey Bogart is a reflection on the American industry repeating its successes. Even without considering Michel’s mimicry, the ‘Bogart character’ remains intertextual due to the noir prototype he has developed and embodied over his career. Allen states, “to audiences of *Casablanca*, Humphrey Bogart is the character Rick, but is also the actor Humphrey Bogart playing the character of Rick” (1999, p. 547). Andrew too writes, “he lives out his life like an American gangster, slapping his pal Berutti on the shoulder in greeting, sporting just the right style hat, keeping a cigarette constantly in his mouth as part of his costume, and driving flashy cars” (1987, p. 13). Andrew argues that Michel is a representation of a representation, in much the same way as Allen refers to Humphrey Bogart as an actor playing an actor. The mythology associated with Bogart is exemplified through Michel by drawing attention to the

familiarisation of an actor playing the same stereotype across a genre, critiquing the star mythology.

The intertextual references to William Faulkner's novel *The Wild Palms* (1939) set up a series of sequential events that contribute to the construction of narrative and characters. Patricia's anxiety regarding an unwanted pregnancy is hinted at during the meeting with her friend and colleague, Van Doude, who remarks "I hope nothing happens to you like the woman in the book" (Fotiade, 2013, p. 76). *The Wild Palms* tells a story of a woman who dies after having an abortion. In the following hotel/bedroom sequence, Patricia reveals to Michel she is pregnant, to which Michel reacts "you should have been more careful." Later in the scene Patricia comments on the beauty of the line in the book, "given the choice between grief or nothingness, I'd choose grief" (Andrew, 1987, p. 87). Michel disagrees with Patricia, revealing a tension between the characters' philosophical views on life. Michel's particularly rebellious, cool, 'all or nothing' attitude is in direct opposition to his American counterpart, Patricia. Throughout the story we see Michel shoot and kill a policeman, and plan an escape to Rome on a whim, seemingly unconcerned about his girlfriend's possibly pregnancy. Ultimately, Michel's part in the policeman's death and Patricia's moral obligation to the law come to a head when she informs the authorities of Michel's whereabouts. As events unfold, Patricia is left with the imminent grief, guilt and responsibility experienced as a consequence of her role in Michel's death. It can be concluded that Faulkner's assertion of "grief or nothingness" provides a framework for Godard to establish his contrasting characters; the contrast being that of the French and American ideologies. The character gender differences are "mapped over a cultural clash", both ultimately becoming victims of their own choices (Fotiade, 2013, p. 81).

In reference to the characterisation of Patricia, Godard declares;

I referred to scenes I remembered from Preminger, Cukor etc. And the character played by Jean Seberg was a continuation of her role in *Bonjour Tristesse*. I could have taken the last shot or Preminger's film and started after dissolving to a title, 'Three Years Later' (Godard, 1986, p. 173).

Patricia Franchini's character is intertextual through the elements that are both pre-determined and built through her past roles in Otto Preminger's *Saint Joan* (1957) and *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958). Seberg's documented miscast in the controversial film *Saint Joan* and poor performance in *Bonjour Tristesse*, would become the platform from which Godard formulated Patricia's identity crisis. Her boyish haircut for instance, is a consequence of her heavily criticised role in Preminger's film, *Saint Joan*, which, paired with her identity crisis in *Breathless*, contributes to the subversion of established representations of femininity in American Hollywood's noir. Her androgyny adds to her feminine power - her ambition, style and charm – as Godard explores the struggle for women in the changing conditions of feminism in modern French society. Her existential confusion too, especially clear when she confesses to friend, Doude, "I don't know if I'm unhappy because I'm not free, or if I'm not free because I'm unhappy", also identifies with her failed stardom, and *Breathless* as Seberg's search for an alternative to the Hollywood system. Patricia's interview with novelist Parvulesco (French director, Jean-Pierre Melville), also interrogates Patricia's crisis, with the scene's objective to explore the comparative differences between French and American women. The character of Patricia presents the challenges as an American female in the Parisian existential climate, with her commitment to societies values and "bourgeois aspirations" (Fotiade, p. 76) contradicting her yearn for independence.

As a conventional noir prescribes, the law breaking 'hero' dies in the film's finale, merciless in redemption. Keeping with the Bogart tradition, Michel dies a death similar to Bogart's final moments in Raoul Walsh's *High Sierra* (1941). Both films also have their romantic counter-parts present at the scene of their death, Patricia standing over Michel asking "What is disgusting?" and Ida Lupino in *High Sierra* asking "What does it mean to crash out?" Fotiade also puts forth Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) as equal in American 'formula' to Michel as victim of his own obsession for love and death (2013, p. 83). Andrew too, provides *Colorado Territory* (1949) and *White Heat* (1949) as films in which heroes share a similar fate to Michel's (1987, p. 14). Underneath the relatively clichéd ending lies a system of codes that include male and female stereotypes. The pastiches of such stereotypes in *Breathless* are performed with a clear understanding of the gender misconceptions, and power positions that determine these stereotypes in the classical construction.

Taken from *High Sierra*, Patricia's question, "What is disgusting?" is attributed with a new contextual meaning, now signifying the communication and philosophical barrier of the 'Franco-American' romance between Patricia and Michel. The entire scene may be attributed new meaning, with the insertion of a Sartrean death redefining the characters in their French existential context.

In her concluding chapter, Fotiade states that "despite the homage paid to a certain American cinema, and in particular to Humphrey Bogart, Jean-Luc Godard shows total indifference to traditional techniques" (2013, p. 94). Godard's paradox is that he exposes the limitations of the Hollywood system yet simultaneously, pays a gratitude to cinematic history. Ironically, Fotiade failed to discuss Godard's cameo "in celebrated Hitchcock style" (2013, p. 30) – a cameo that best signifies the described paradox. Godard's Hitchcock style cameo appearance plays a key role in Michel's demise, with Godard contributing to the death of his own character. Although the cameo could be interpreted for its surface level meaning (an anonymous passer-by who identifies the wanted man in the newspaper he is reading) the cameo is somewhat pivotal in terms of the upkeep in classic noir conventions and Godard's rendition of an American gangster film.

Godard's cameo appearance underscores his own authorial control, which, in light of his copycat gangster film, identifies his own abidance with the conventional noir agreement that the hero must die. What is perhaps more interesting about the cameo is Godard's change to the ending of Truffaut's proposed scene, a change with obvious intent. The original ending would in fact challenge the genre conventions with Michel fleeing to Italy in Berruti's (his driver) car while hurling insults at Patricia (Fotiade, 2013, p. 30), yet Godard believed he had no business in opposing the genre codes. Through his cameo, Godard places himself at the centre of the film's conflict; the conflict between the capital system and the cinema's artistic expression that has troubled Godard and his colleagues through his cinephilic years. Godard knew he would be saying more about Hollywood conventions by abiding with their conventions outside the context of Hollywood system. In doing so, Godard would ultimately signify the end to a tradition of the Hollywood film noir as we know it, marking the crossroads of Hollywood cinema with the *Nouvelle Vague*.

Unveiling the stream of references in *Breathless* through a metatextual analysis demonstrates a product constructed through the ingenuity of cinephilia. The film can be read in its simplicity as a French version of an American film noir, resembling those of the 1940s and 1950s. With closer inspection of the metatextuality however, there is no denying the primary concern of *Breathless* is its experiment in redefining established Hollywood codes, and ultimately, redefining the entire status of the film medium. It may also be proposed that *Breathless* fakes its identity as an American gangster film in order to pursue its critical function. The message in *Breathless* is diametrical in construction, paying homage to the history of cinema and demonstrating a complete disrespect for the established codes of the medium. Godard's exclusive use of metatextuality to construct his narrative and characters draws attention to the film's critical status and displays his own polemical relationship with cinema. *Breathless* ultimately presents us with a string of paradoxes, that with its depth and complexity, could do no more than embody its creator – Godard, the film critic.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, for Godard and his colleagues at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, cinephilia remained the reason for an engagement in the cinematic medium, that extended to film criticism and filmmaking. Thus, the question remains, how can cinephilia be represented in a film? Through an investigation into what forms screen attachments, an understanding of cinephilia is reached, with its concern involving the subjective experiences of cinema to decipher the essence of the art form. Godard's film criticism aligns with this proposition – a serious engagement with cinema, both passionate and fruitful that bore his aesthetical concerns for Hollywood filmmaking. In fact, Keathley would grant Godard as the *Cahier* most inclined to cinephilic habits, which serves no better than to establish his filmmaking as cinephilic expression. With *Breathless* as equally daring and radical as Godard's critical essays, the concern still remains that filmmaking is yet to be categorised an example of cinephilia. In an interview after the success of *Breathless*, Godard declares, "As a critic, I thought of myself as a filmmaker. Today I still think of myself as a critic, and in a sense I am more than ever before" (1986, p. 171).

If Godard continues to think and act like a critic in his filmmaking, why should our pre-conceived notions of film criticism as a form of literature prohibit filmmaking from being considered film criticism? Why is it thus the medium of expression that evades its inclusion as cinephilia? The sophisticated collection of metatextuality in *Breathless* functions somewhat identically to that of Godard's literary film criticism and proves its evidence for film criticism and cinephilia. If we remember, it is Godard's first critical essay, *Joseph Mankiewicz* that we see a clutter of other referred to texts in his focus on Mankiewicz's film, *House of Strangers*. Godard is already exhibiting his panoptic cultural knowledge and forming an evaluative measure that reveals a similar 'spirit of art' between two texts. In *Breathless* too, the exhausted references of other texts, both of high and popular art categorises, construct the historiographical plane of cinema which forms a critique of Hollywood as incompetent to that of the essential art cinema. The conundrum of art vs. commodity that has troubled the *Cahiers* now represents itself in a film by Godard aligning Hollywood codes to a French existential context.

In *Breathless*, Godard poses the question that if something has already been done, why do it again? (Godard, 1986, p. 183). Yet, Godard does ‘do’ American cinema again, but so cleverly that no one dare try to reform the illusions and myths that *Breathless* exposes. *Breathless* is therefore an experiment in Godard’s attempt to show us where exactly Hollywood cinema falls short in displaying a cinematic essence. In doing so, Godard not only shows us what this ‘essence’ is supposed to look like, but also, becomes this ‘essence’ through freedom, vitality and passion – *Breathless*, its own revelation of cinephilia.

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